

### **Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

What is claimed is:

1. (cancelled)

2. (currently amended)        A flat sealing ring (1) for producing a fluid-tight coupling of two surfaces which are to be sealed against one another by means of a contact force, the ring (1) having an elastically deformable base ring (2) with an upper side, a lower side, and an inner circumferential edge, a stiffening ring ([3,] 3'[, 3'']) for limiting compression of the base ring (2), and at least one protective layer (4), wherein said base ring (2) comprises a core of elastically deformable material (6), wherein a cross-section of said core comprises a center section with first and second wing sections extending from said center section, wherein each said first and second wing sections comprises respective first and second planar surfaces parallel to a first ring plane and extending directly from said center section, wherein the respective first planar surfaces lie on a second ring plane and the respective second planar surfaces lie on a third ring plane, different than the second ring plane, wherein the center section is at least partially disposed between the second and third planes and extends from between the second and third planes to beyond the second and third planes, wherein the at least one protective layer (4) covers the upper side, the lower side, and the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) ~~center section and at least a portion of the first or second wing sections~~, wherein the stiffening ring is provided at at least one of the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2), wherein the stiffening ring is joined to the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2) in a firm or form-locking manner, wherein the stiffening ring ([3,] 3'[, 3'']) comprises hard plastic or metal and has, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring (2), wherein the height of the stiffening ring perpendicularly

to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring (2) perpendicularly to the ring plane, and wherein the stiffening ring ([3,] 3'[, 3'']) and the protective layer (4) are produced as a single piece from the same material.

3. (previously presented) The sealing ring according to claim 2 wherein the stiffening ring is made of metal.

4. (previously presented) The sealing ring according to claim 3 wherein the stiffening ring is made of stainless steel.

5-8. (cancelled)

9. (previously presented) A flat sealing ring according to claim 2, wherein the at least one protective layer (4) is produced from a chemically resistant material.

10-12 (cancelled)

13. (previously presented) A flat sealing ring according to claim 2 wherein the at least one protective layer (4) is produced from a fluoropolymer.

14. (cancelled)

15. (previously presented) A flat sealing ring according to claim 2 wherein the at least one protective layer (4) is produced from polytetrafluoroethylene (PTFE).

16-20. (cancelled)

21. (withdrawn) A sealing ring (1) comprising:

an elastically deformable base ring (2) having an inner circumferential edge and an outer circumferential edge; and,

at least one stiffening segment (3, 3', 3''), wherein the at least one stiffening segment is connected to at least one of the inner and outer circumferential edges, wherein the at least one stiffening segment covers less than the entire inner and outer circumferential edges, wherein the at least one stiffening segment, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, has a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring, and wherein the height of the at least one stiffening segment perpendicularly to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring perpendicularly to the ring plane.

22. (withdrawn) A sealing ring (1) comprising:

an elastically deformable base ring (2) having an inner circumferential edge and an outer circumferential edge;

at least one stiffening segment (3, 3', 3''); and,

and at least one protective layer (4), wherein the at least one stiffening segment is disposed within the base ring in a circumferential direction and is at least partially uncovered by the base ring, wherein the at least one stiffening segment, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, has a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring, wherein the height of the at least one stiffening segment perpendicularly to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring perpendicularly to the ring plane, and wherein the at least one protective layer covers at least a portion of the base ring.

23. (currently amended) A flat sealing ring (1) for producing a fluid-tight coupling of two surfaces which are to be sealed against one another by means of a contact force, the ring (1) having an elastically deformable base ring (2) with an upper side, a lower side, and an inner circumferential edge, a stiffening ring ([3,] 3'[[, 3'']]) for limiting compression of the base ring (2), and at least one protective layer (4), wherein said base ring (2) comprises a core of elastically deformable material (6), wherein a cross-section of said core comprises a center section with at least one wing section extending from said center section, wherein said at least one wing section comprises first and second planar surfaces parallel to a ring plane and extending directly from said center section, wherein the at least one protective layer (4) covers the upper side, the lower side, and the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) ~~center section and at least a portion of the at least one wing section~~, wherein the stiffening ring is provided at at least one of the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2), wherein the stiffening ring is joined to the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2) in a firm or form-locking manner, wherein the stiffening ring ([3,] 3'[[, 3'']]) comprises hard plastic or metal and has, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring (2), wherein the height of the stiffening ring perpendicularly to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring (2) perpendicularly to the ring

plane, and wherein the stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) and the protective layer (4) are produced as a single piece from the same material.

24. (currently amended) A flat sealing ring (1) for producing a fluid-tight coupling of two surfaces which are to be sealed against one another by means of a contact force, the ring (1) having an elastically deformable base ring (2) with an upper side, a lower side, and an inner circumferential edge, a stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) for limiting compression of the base ring (2), and at least one protective layer (4), wherein said base ring (2) comprises a core of elastically deformable material (6), wherein a cross-section of said core comprises a center section with at least one wing section extending from said center section, wherein the at least one wing section comprises first and second planar surfaces parallel to a ring plane and extending directly from the center section, wherein the at least one protective layer (4) completely covers the upper side, the lower side, and the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) ~~center section~~, wherein the stiffening ring is provided at at least one of the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2), wherein the stiffening ring is joined to the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2) in a firm or form-locking manner, wherein the stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) comprises hard plastic or metal and has, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring (2), wherein the height of the stiffening ring perpendicularly to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring (2) perpendicularly to the ring plane, and wherein the stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) and the protective layer (4) are produced as a single piece from the same material.

25. (currently amended) A flat sealing ring (1) for producing a fluid-tight coupling of two surfaces which are to be sealed against one another by means of a contact force, the ring (1) having an elastically deformable base ring (2) with an upper side, a lower side, and an inner circumferential edge, a stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) for limiting compression of the base ring (2), and at least one protective layer (4), wherein said base ring (2) comprises a core of elastically deformable material (6), wherein a cross-section of said core comprises a center section with first and second wing sections extending from said center section, wherein each said

first and second wing sections comprises respective first and second planar surfaces parallel to a first ring plane and extending directly from said center section, wherein the respective first planar surfaces lie on a second ring plane and the respective second planar surfaces lie on a third ring plane, different than the second ring plane, wherein the center section is at least partially disposed between the second and third planes and extends from between the second and third planes to beyond the second and third planes, wherein the at least one protective layer (4) completely covers the upper side, the lower side, and the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) center section, wherein the stiffening ring is provided at at least one of the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2), wherein the stiffening ring is joined to the inner circumferential edge of the base ring (2) or the outer circumferential edge of the base ring (2) in a firm or form-locking manner, wherein the stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) comprises hard plastic or metal and has, at least perpendicularly to the ring plane, a lesser deformability, or greater firmness, than the base ring (2), wherein the height of the stiffening ring perpendicularly to the ring plane is less than the greatest height of the base ring (2) perpendicularly to the ring plane, and wherein the stiffening ring ([[3,]] 3'[[, 3'']]) and the protective layer (4) are produced as a single piece from the same material.

26-27. (cancelled)

28. (new) The sealing ring according to claim 2 further comprising an adhesive layer joining the stiffening ring to the base ring; or wherein the stiffening ring is vulcanized into the base ring (2) or wherein the stiffening ring is joined to the base ring by injection molding.

29. (new) The sealing ring according to claim 2 wherein the protective layer is joined to the base ring.